789 Poison is thus nãnde par excellence, although the latter can exist in other forms, at the same time less precise and more complex. We attach extreme importance to the fact that a rigorously utilitarian technique of the manufacture of poisons is found associated with a theory which accounts for their effectiveness through the intermediary of metaphysical concepts. The presence among the Nambikwara of a curare reduced to a basic product, and whose preparation excludes all ritual, associated with the very low cultural level of these Indians, poses in a particularly impressive way the question of finding out if these characteristics which are very primitive are so by origin or constitute the residue of an impoverished culture. Now, it is much more reasonable to interpret the apparent contradiction of theory [121 174] and practice in matters of poison by the loss of complex rituals which farther north are attached to the making of curare, than it would be to explain how a theory of supernatural character could have been built on the bases of treatment which has remained purely experimental, of the root of the strychnos.

Besides the notion of nãnde we should examine another which is the object of a particularly advanced elaboration among the eastern groups, that of the atãsu (al). Atãsu signifies animal, but the use of the term by the Indians is complex. First of all it is the animal taken in a generic sense, in opposition to the inanimate. They present me with a honey cake and, pointing out the body of a bee which is still in it, I ask what it is. They do not answer, "it is a bee" but: atãsu, "it is the animal." Atãsu also means real animals, but ones without their own names in the vocabulary, and which are of particularly fearful character. Thus oxen are called by this name by the Nambikwara who never saw any [99] before the years 1910-1915, and who entertain a great fear of them. Then we find the same term to designate the stars (eastern groups), and the same name is given to the ticktock of the clock, both conceived of as realities animated by mysterious characteristics. Finally, atãsu is a special animal of supernatural essence, which is seen appearing in two cases—at night, on the road, in certain places and during certain periods, and upon the approach of death. In the first case, one risks being attacked and killed by the atãsu if one does not defend oneself 789 411 in the appropriate manner. This means is found in the throwing stick [épieu] (distinct from the digging stick), thrown in a prescribed manner. The throwing stick, a large piece of wood of flattened form [286 531] and pointed at the end is furnished with a handle usually decorated with black and white bark weaving (javelin: hĩdosu [al], kẽũẽre

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and dots hanging down from the nape of the neck. A similar but shorter headdress may be worn in daily life.

Hair is groomed with a composite comb. It is cut with a shell, either all around the head at the level of the ear lobe, or only across the forehead, the back and sides being allowed to fall loose. Body painting consists mainly of urucú smeared uniformly, but some groups roughly trace black dots and stripes with genipa juice on the chest and legs. Face and body hair is generally pulled out, especially by women; men often have a sparse moustache and beard.

TRANSPORTATION

Canoes are unknown. Small waterways are crossed on a fallen tree; large ones by swimming, sometimes with the help of large floating bundles of buriti palm stems. Babies straddle their mother's hip supported by a large sling of bark or woven cotton.

MANUFACTURES

Spinning.—Women spin cotton with a crude drop spindle made of grass stalk. The whorl is a wild fruit, a potsherd, or a conical piece of sun-dried clay. Cotton thread is rolled in a ball and, like everything else in a *Nambicuara* household, wrapped in leaves. Women and men twist tucum and buriti fibers on their thighs to make string.

Weaving.—Weaving is limited to cotton bands and belts which men make on small, rough looms of the *"Arawak"* type (pl. 37, *center, right*).

Basketry.—Men make long, open-mouthed, cylindrical baskets using bamboo strips and a hexagonal, open weave. Fire fans are plaited of palm leaves. The *Northern Nambicuara* used palm leaves to weave low square baskets for storing the manioc and maize flour.

Pottery.—Pottery is unknown among the *Eastern Nambicuara*. In other groups, women make coarse pots of varying sizes. They mix the clay with ashes, fire the pot in the open, and wash it while it is still hot in an infusion of resinous bark.

Implements.—Stone ax heads were formerly fixed with wax and strings in the loop of a bent handle. Knives and drills are made of a crude flint chip or piece of iron fastened with wax and thread at the end of a piece of wood or between two pieces of wood, which form the handle. Women hollow small cylindrical mortars in tree trunks by means of fire. Fire is made with a fire drill, crude rubber serving as tinder. The Indians burn almecega (*Tetragastris balsamifera*) resin for light. Knives are thin, sharp-edged pieces of wood.

Weapons.—The *Nambicuara* bow is about 5 to 7 feet (2 m.) long, the section being flat, semicircular, or concave according to the group. The grip is wrapped with cotton. The arrow is released between the thumb and the first finger, the three other fingers being placed on the

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PLATE 37.—Nambicuara and upper Guaporé Indians. *Top:* Pimenta Bueno hut. *Center, left: Nambicuara* family shelter. *Center, right: Nambicuara* man weaving an armband. *Bottom, left: Nambicuara* family. *Bottom, right:* Woman drilling a mother of pearl earring. (Courtesy Claude Lévi-Strauss, except *bottom, left,* by courtesy American Museum of Natural History.)

[end plate 2]

3: Lévi-Strauss E-5 (1938-1939) 1944
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ties down to their smallest details. There is, undoubtedly, a function in chieftainship. This can, however, be reached only through analysis as the underlying principle of the institution. In other words, the differing structure of the digestive organs in man, ox, fish and clam do not point toward different functions of the digestive system. The function is always and everywhere the same, and can be better studied, and more fully understood where it exists under a simple form—for instance, in a mollusc. Similarly, and as Professor Lowie once wrote, if anthropology is to be considered as a scientific study, its subject matter cannot be individual cultures, but culture taken as a whole; the rôle of individual cultures being to offer, according to their own characteristics, special angles from which the basic functions of culture, although universal in application, can be more easily reached.

This will perhaps help us to eliminate preliminary questions which otherwise could have proved very difficult. Anthropologists in South America and elsewhere have been eagerly debating the question of whether these South American tribes—nomadic, relying mostly on collecting and gathering, with little or no agriculture, little or no pottery, and, in some cases, with no dwelling other than crude shelters—should be considered as truly primitive and as having preserved their exceptionally low cultural level through tarriance, or whether they did not previously possess a higher type of social and material organization and have regressed to a pseudo-archaism under unfavorable circumstances. The Nambikuara are one of those tribes which, along with the Siriono, on the other side of the Guaporé valley, the Cayapo, Bororo, Karaja of central Brazil, the so-called *Gé* of Central and Eastern Brazil, and some others, together form a kernel of primitiveness surrounded, in the West, by the higher tribes of the upper Amazon, the Bolivian plain and the Chaco, and from the Oronoco's to the La Plata's estuaries, by a coastal strip inhabited mostly by the Ara[illegible]k, Carib and Tupi-Guarani linguistic families. An independent linguistic stock divided into several dialects, the Nambikuara seem to display one of the more backward cultures in South America. At least, some of their bands do not build huts and are wholly ignorant of pottery and, even among the others, these two arts are exceedingly poor. There is no weaving, except for the narrow arm and leg bands which are made of cotton; no dress whatsoever, either for the men or for the women; no sleeping contrivances, such as hammocks or platforms; the natives being used to sleeping on the bare ground without the protection of blankets, mats or hides.

283 breaks down. After one-half hour the starchy material is washed out and the ribbons begin to separate into fine strands of fiber. The hank is then shaken out and hung up to dry. When of good quality, that is, when the rod is of the right age, the fibers dry out a pale cream color. While the man is occupied at this task the girls make temporary necklaces from the green outer skin and the boys use the thin central stems as arrows for their small bows. These dried-out hanks are [301] a favorite decoration of the Nambicuara when painted with horizontal bands of urucú. They can then be suspended from the neck and allowed to hang down the back, or pieces are attached to the arm bands, leg bands, and in front to the belt.

Cotton twine is used for making arrows, stringing beads, weaving arm bands and the narrow shoulder straps which women use for carrying young children. From the cotton bush (*kúndsu*) the woman picks the bolls (*kúnkisu*) to make cotton twine (*kúnálisu*). As the making of buriti twine is a man's task, so the making of cotton twine is purely a woman's task. After picking the seeds from the bolls she spreads the cotton into flat disks and then into circles. Next she breaks the circles and joins them to form a long rope about an inch in diameter. This rope she winds around her arm, twists the end of it with her fingers, and fastens it to the top of a spindle (*wonikisu*). With a twirl of her fingers she sets it spinning and lets it drop, plucking out the cotton as it is spun. Later she unties the string and fastens it near the whorl and then by spinning the spindle on the ground the twine is wrapped around it. This process is repeated until the cotton rope is used up.

286 The men do the weaving on a true but very makeshift loom. Two forked sticks, roughly a yard long, are thrust into the ground about 2 feet apart and at an angle. One cross bar rests in the forks while another is fastened on near the ground. The warp is wound around these cross bars. The heddle, shuttle, and sword are used in [177] weaving the narrow material. It seems very likely that this type of loom was taken over from the Arawakan Paressí.

The bast strap or band (*sa'am*) is made from embira and is used for pressing manioc pulp, for carrying children or baskets, and, when cut into strips, is used for tying up bundles.

[p. 95 (A)]

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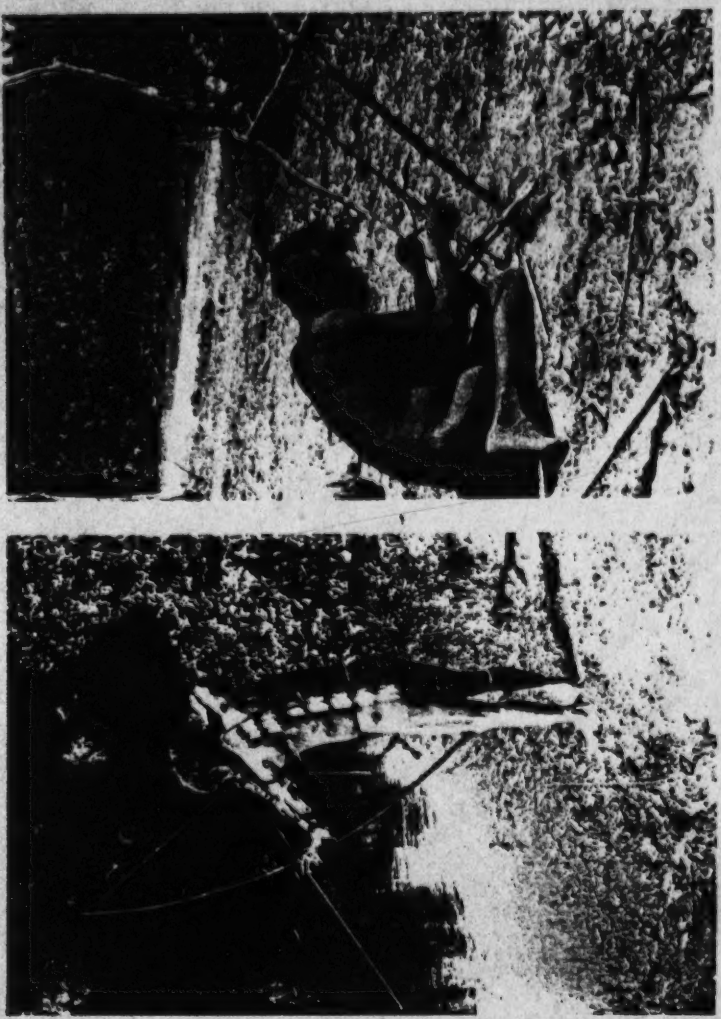

[p. 136 (H)]

372 They make fire with mastic resin sticks, the tips of which are wrapped in straw to protect them from the rain.

[Fig. 63]

241 415 Their plots are worked with pointed sticks. The seeds of urucu, gourd plants (Lagenaria) and cotton are kept in leaf containers.

278 824 Medicinal fruit (Solanum mammosum) is also saved, as well as roots, leaves, etc.

[Fig. 31]

386 The collection contains two samples of dyes: a paste of urucu and fat, sweetly scented, which the women use to paint their body after the bath (huduhukaidi); and a variety of red ocher. [279]

248 Cotton (1) is represented by seeds (rim de boi variety) in leaf

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1. According to the studies of Fa. Schmidt and Nordenskjöld (concerning hammocks), cotton reached Brazil from the Andes and was cultivated mostly by the Tupian Indians in the midst of the Amazon jungle. It is used less extensively among the Arawakan Indians. This distribution, due in part to the needs of the plant, explains its presence among the Nambicuara, who are located at the extreme west of the plateau. (R. L.)

[283 236] containers; cotton thread (kondzú) from a spindle (gdaretatú); skeins [155] of spun cotton; cotton fabric (sareguêzê--strap used to carry children).

[283] The spindle is made of a palm splinter imbedded in a round potsherd.

[Fig. 64]

415 824 Kaneçú are fruits of the Lagenaria genus used as containers and storage vessels. Some hold crudely chopped tobacco and are stoppled with a corn cob, a method frequently used by the frontiersmen.

[See fig. ... (28) p. 308.]